

Humbug Marsh Protection Completed (MI)

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Detroit, MI, 9/16/04 - U.S. Congressman John Dingell, the Trust for Public Land, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today the sale of Humbug Marsh, 410 acres of marsh and upland located along the Detroit River. This marks the final transaction that completes the conservation effort. The property will be owned and managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. The sale concludes a long and ultimately successful struggle by local citizens and environmentalists to keep the sensitive marsh protected. Located on the western banks of the Lower Detroit River, the land will provide birdwatchers, boaters, anglers, hunters and hikers with a rare urban opportunity to experience the natural habitat of the river. The announcement was made at a press conference at the site of the future interpretive center for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge adjacent to Humbug Marsh.

"The acquisition of Humbug Marsh is the most significant development for the Refuge since its inception in 2001," Dingell said. "As an avid sportsman and outdoorsman, part of my vision for the Refuge has always been the inclusion of this wildlife haven in the shadow of the city of Detroit. The Refuge is more than just land; it now includes pristine land populated with unique and valuable species. With this new jewel as the centerpiece of the Refuge, all of the residents of Southeastern Michigan will benefit from this magnificent treasure. I would like to thank TPL for their hard work and perseverance in conserving this valuable land, which is distinct in its urban setting. I'd also like to thank Governor Jennifer Granholm for her work in completing this transfer."

The Humbug Complex is made up of Humbug Island, Humbug Marsh, and adjacent undeveloped upland habitats. It includes 410 acres of unique fish and wildlife habitats in Gibraltar and Trenton, Michigan. Humbug Marsh represents the last mile of natural shoreline on the U.S. mainland of the Detroit River. Over 97% of the coastal wetlands in the river have been destroyed by shoreline development and nearly all of the coastal wetlands in western Lake Erie have disappeared during the past 50 years. Because they are home to such a high diversity of fish and wildlife, the marshes have been identified as globally unique and significant in biological diversity - nothing like this marsh exists anywhere outside the Great Lakes.

The property was acquired by the Trust for Public Land last fall as part of a bankruptcy proceeding involving a local development company, Made in Detroit. Over the past year, the Trust for Public Land worked with city, county, state and federal governments to develop a long-term conservation solution, raised funds to pay for the purchase and cleaned up trash and dumping that had accumulated on a portion of the property over the years, preparing it for eventual sale to a long term conservation steward.

For Al Raymond, Director of Special Projects at the Trust for Public Land, the impact of this project is far greater than a simple real estate transaction. "Land conservation has the power to transform a community. The protection of Humbug Marsh, as part of the greater endeavor to restore the Lower Detroit River, is visionary in its scope and importance. The people of this region are creating a natural treasure in the midst of one of America's most urban settings. People are again beginning to see the Detroit River as a resource for world-class fishing and incredible recreational opportunities. This is a powerful statement of hope and faith in the future and TPL is proud to have played a role." Critical support for the protection effort came from public and private sources including the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Community Foundation for Southeastern Michigan, the Great Lakes Fishery Trust, General Motors Corporation and Ford Motor Company.

"The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge is a beautiful ecological mosaic made up of hundreds of unique habitats and Humbug Marsh is the most significant," added John Hartig, Refuge Manager, Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. "Acquisition of Humbug Marsh manifests the commitment of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Trust for Public Land, and many others to build a world-class urban refuge in the industrial heartland."

Future plans for the site include a visitor's center on property adjacent to Humbug Marsh, providing access and interpretation of the woods, marsh and riverbanks for the public.

Founded in 1972, the Trust for Public Land specializes in conservation real estate, applying its expertise in negotiations, public finance, and law to protect land for people as parks, greenways, and open space. TPL has protected over 1.3 million acres of land across the nation. In Michigan, TPL has acquired and conveyed over 55,000 acres and has assisted various communities throughout the state in their conservation efforts. The Trust for Public Land depends on the support and generosity of individuals, foundations, and businesses to achieve our land for people mission. To learn more, visit www.tpl.org.